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**NSA Declassification/Release Instructions on File**Principal Judgments

- The primary mission of the Soviet Navy is to furnish a deterrent to attack through the presence of a credible and survivable SSBN force, and, in time of general war, to participate in the nuclear exchange and strike at soft targets such as military bases, industries and government centers.
- The Soviets routinely maintain five of their operational SSBNs on station. The Soviets also appear to keep some 25 SSBNs ready for deployment on 24 hours notice. The majority of these -- the Y-class SSBNs -- will take about a week to ten days to reach station after notice.
- Under conditions of sufficient warning to get additional forces to firing stations, the Soviets might currently expect as many as 400 sea-based missiles to reach their targets in an initial strike. Under conditions of no warning successful NATO damage limiting operations, delays in command and control procedures, or deliberate Soviet decisions, the Soviets might be able to launch only a few score missiles.

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- By the late 1970s, we expect the Soviet SSBN force to expand to 62 units. The 62nd unit is already under construction, and we believe all of them will be completed.\*
  - If the proposed SAL Agreement covering the 1977-1985 period is successfully concluded, the Soviets will be limited to a total of 2,400 delivery vehicles -- ICBMs, SLBMs, and intercontinental bombers -- with no sub-limit on SLBMs. This would apparently require some reductions in the numbers and changes in the mix of Soviet strategic forces, and we are not sure how this will affect the SSBN force.

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\* *State and CIA reserve.*

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- An extensive program to refit new and probably MIRVed missiles to the force is expected to start in the late 1970s, and to continue through the mid-1980s. (Paragraph 62.)
- The Soviets continue to believe that a war with the West will probably evolve into a short nuclear one, but they also see some increasing likelihood that a war could begin, and perhaps even remain, conventional. Soviet doctrine calls for the earliest possible destruction of enemy nuclear capabilities, including naval ones, in the early phases of a conventional conflict. Because the Soviets think it unlikely that a war with the West would remain conventional, we believe that they would seek to destroy SSBNs in the early stages of a conflict. However, it is possible, if the Soviets saw the opportunity to contain the conflict at conventional levels and given the very low probability that they could actually destroy an SSBN, that the Soviet leadership would refrain from attacking SSBNs in order to reduce the chances of escalation. (Paragraphs 5-8, 22.)

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- Soviet capabilities for combating Western carrier strike forces -- to them a first priority task -- include forces for the surveillance of NATO carrier task forces in peacetime, and a combination of air, submarine and surface forces for the destruction of those NATO carrier task forces in war.
- We believe that, given time to coordinate all of their surveillance assets, the Soviets would probably be able to locate and track most US aircraft carriers in the northeastern Atlantic, Norwegian Sea, northwestern Pacific Ocean and the eastern Mediterranean. We believe that coordinated strikes against Western carriers in these areas would be at least partially successful.
- The degree of success would largely depend upon the location of the carriers, whether the Soviets use conventional or nuclear weapons, and whether surprise were achieved. If nuclear weapons were used in a surprise attack, most of the carriers in these areas could be destroyed. On the other hand, timely warning of a Soviet attack would allow the carriers to take evasive and defensive action, and such action would probably assure the survival of some carriers, especially against a conventional attack. (Paragraph 14 and 20.)

- We expect the Soviets to maintain the high priority on combatting enemy aircraft carrier task forces. Cruise missile submarines will continue to be built throughout the 1970s, as will major surface ships with antiship missiles. The SS-NX-13 antiship nuclear ballistic missile will most likely enter the force in the next year or two. In the mid-1970s

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[REDACTED] should be available on an intermittent basis, and possibly on a nearly continuous basis in the late 1970s. (Paragraph 62.)

- The strike capability of the Soviet navy against Western surface forces will be significantly improved by the deployment with Soviet naval aviation of the BACKFIRE ASM strike aircraft. The BACKFIRE's increased range capability will give it coverage over all the major sea lanes leading to Europe and extend Pacific Ocean coverage to Hawaii -- areas that were formerly out of range of the strike aircraft of the Soviet Navy. Equally important, BACKFIRE's capability for high subsonic, low-level flight will also give it a better chance than the BADGER of successfully crossing potentially hostile land areas such as Turkey and Greece in

order to operate over the Mediterranean, an area over which, in practical terms, the Soviets could not now operate their naval strike aircraft. Its variable flight profile and high-speed capabilities -- Mach II at high altitudes -- will give it a higher probability of penetrating carrier defenses in the open ocean than was the case with the BADGER aircraft.

(Paragraph 19.)

-- Soviet capabilities for antisubmarine warfare -- countering western SSBNs and defending against attacks from western general purpose submarines -- are extremely limited.

- We expect the Soviets to continue to pursue various approaches to antisubmarine warfare, with emphasis on the anti-SSBN problem. Improved ASW sensors and supporting systems and stand-off weapons will be more extensively deployed. The construction rate of ASW submarines probably will increase.

(Paragraph 62.)

- Although we believe the Soviets in wartime would attempt to attack western SSBNs, their capability to do so in the open ocean is negligible, and will probably remain so during the next decade. However,

we cannot exclude the possibility that the Soviets might be able to detect a few SSBNs in limited areas such as the western approach to the Barents Sea or in strategic choke points such as the Greenland-Iceland-UK gap.

- We do not expect that Soviet forces will have systems for the reliable detection of western attack submarines beyond the range of the latter's weapon systems during the period of this estimate.

(Paragraphs 22 and 25.)

- The Soviet and other Warsaw Pact navies have concentrated large numbers of small coastal patrol and ASW ships, minewarfare craft, short-range submarines, and ASW aircraft in the Black, Baltic and Barents Seas and the Sea of Japan to secure their sea frontiers in time of war. These forces continue to receive the latest Soviet equipment and have some significant capabilities against Western forces. The Soviets and other Warsaw Pact navies could probably establish control over the Baltic and Black Seas early in a conflict, and plant mines to prevent penetrations by Western naval forces. In the Sea of Japan and in the Barents Sea, enemy surface units could also be destroyed quickly, but Western nuclear submarines

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would pose a more difficult problem and the Soviets probably could not protect their ships from this threat. (Paragraphs 26 and 27.)

-- The Soviets and their Warsaw Pact allies maintain amphibious forces in the Barents Sea area, in the Baltic and Black Seas, and in the Sea of Japan. The effectiveness of operations of these forces would probably vary widely. The northern cape of Norway could probably be taken fairly readily if not strongly defended. In the Baltic, Soviet and other Warsaw Pact forces could probably capture the Danish islands if lightly defended and link up with land forces attacking Jutland. In the Black Sea area, strong Turkish defenses and difficult terrain would make a coordinated land and sea assault on the Turkish straits more difficult. The Soviets probably could not seize these Straits quickly using conventional weapons. Soviet naval infantry capabilities in the Pacific are insufficient for conducting amphibious assaults on the Japanese home islands to secure exits from the Sea of Japan. (Paragraph 29.)

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- We believe that, if a conventional war in Europe were to continue for some time, the Soviets would probably mount an interdiction campaign against Western sea lines of communications. The Soviets would have major problems in doing so. They do not have forward bases for resupply, and attempts to operate their small number of resupply ships beyond Soviet-controlled waters could be easily countered. Thus their submarines would almost certainly have to return through choke points to an uncertain resupply situation. Moreover, the North Atlantic sea lanes are basically beyond the range of all but BEAR and BACKFIRE aircraft. In a prolonged conventional conflict, therefore, the Soviets could affect attrition on NATO shipping, but could not disrupt it completely. We believe it unlikely, that, outside of direct involvement in a war with the West, the USSR would attack Western sea lines of communication, however vulnerable. (Paragraphs 31 and 32.)
- We do not believe the Soviets are building naval forces for intervention in distant areas against substantial opposition nor do we believe they have much capability now to do so. (Paragraphs 33 and 34.)

- Soviet ability to sustain combat at sea for long periods would be severely circumscribed by logistics-related weaknesses. Most of the new larger Soviet surface combatants have no reloads for their major offensive weapons systems, and the ships' limited underway replenishment capability constrain Soviet abilities for sustained combat at sea. The current forward posture of the Soviet Navy is based on auxiliaries and merchant ships in anchorages and in Third World ports and presumes a non-hostile environment. (Paragraphs 36 and 59.)
- Soviet surface ships and submarines are kept in several stages of readiness. About one-half including those units routinely deployed to forward areas are ready for operations within a day or two. Some of these would be ready within a few hours. An additional 25-30 percent are in limited readiness and would be able to put to sea immediately only with reduced stores and crew and at a reduced combat effectiveness. The remainder are in overhaul or modernization would not be ready even in 90 days. Three-fourths of Soviet naval aircraft could be ready within two days and all but 10 percent within five to ten days. (Paragraph 4.)

-- Since the mid-1960s, the Soviet Navy has diversified its areas of operation. However, the rapid growth rate in naval activity away from home waters that characterized the late 1960s has slowed in the 1970s. Virtually the only increase in the last four years has been related to unusual circumstances such as minesweeping operations in 1974 in the Gulf of Suez and the Bangladesh harbor clearing operations in 1971. We believe that the majority of the Soviet out-of-area operations, especially those in the Norwegian Sea and the Pacific Ocean, have been related primarily to training for operations against Western navies. But we also believe that many of the Soviet out-of-area operations reflect a Soviet decision to use naval forces more extensively in furthering Soviet foreign policy objectives in peacetime. (Paragraphs 40 through 45.)

-- Through their naval operations in peacetime the Soviet leadership has sought to influence US actions at some cost and risk while at the same time keeping to a minimum the chances of actual US-Soviet conflict. We expect this approach to continue. (Paragraph 48.)

- We believe that the level of Soviet naval out-of-area activity is approaching practical limits given the USSR's current priorities. Over the longer term as newer more capable ships enter the force, there will be a moderate but steady increase in the number of ships available for distant operations. Any rapid increase in sustained distant deployment probably would require a more intensive ship building effort, not only of surface combatants, but also of logistic support ships. (Paragraphs 50 and 51.)
- We believe that there will be no disproportionate increase in the allocation of resources to naval programs or major expansion of shipbuilding facilities beyond those currently underway during the period of this estimate. The present share of resource claims has held steady for some time as the percentage of total defense expenditures and represents a share that can be held for some time to come. (Paragraph 64.)